

REMARKS

Favorable reconsideration of this application as presently amended and in light of the following discussion is respectfully requested.

Claims 1, 3-11, and 13-45 are pending in this application. Claims 1, 13-14, 25, 35-36, and 39 are amended by the present amendment.

Claims 1, 6-11, 13-15, 18-20, 23-25, 29-37, 40-42, 44, and 45 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as anticipated by JP 2000-86064 to Ishiguro et al. (herein "Ishiguro"). Claims 3 and 26 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as unpatentable over Ishiguro in view of JP 62-8965 to Hoshi et al. (herein "Hoshi"). Claims 4, 5, 16, 17, 21, 22, 27, 28, 38, 39, and 43 were objected to as dependent upon rejected base claims, but were noted as allowable if rewritten in independent form to include all of the limitations of their base claims and any intervening claims.

Applicants gratefully acknowledge the indication of the allowable subject matter.

Applicants and Applicants' representatives also thank Examiner Patrick Mackey for the courtesies extended to Applicants' representatives during the personal interview conducted on May 11, 2004. In the personal interview, agreement was reached on claim language which Applicants believe is similar to that contained in presently amended Claims 1 and 25 distinguishing the claims over Ishiguro.

Addressing now each of the rejections based on the cited art to Ishiguro and Ishiguro in view of Hoshi, those rejections are traversed by the present response.

Amended Claim 1 recites, inter alia, a receiving portion formed within a portion of an upper surface of a discharge tray, the recess including front and rear points that are below the upper surface of said discharge tray, and the front and rear points contacting the upper surface of the discharge tray. Claim 25 is amended in a substantially similar manner as Claim 1.

Support for the amendments can be found at least at FIGs. 1, 2(a), 4, and 5, and at page 25, lines 17-25 of the specification. Thus, no new matter is added.

In a non-limiting exemplary embodiment, FIG. 4 illustrates receiving portions 80a, 80b formed within a portion of the upper surface of a tray 12. The receiving portions 80a, 80b include front and rear points (with respect to the length of the tray 12) that are below and contact the upper surface of the discharge tray 12. Moreover, in another example, FIG. 8 shows that the receiving portion 80a enables a part of an arranging member 102a to extend below the upper surface of the discharge tray 12.

As discussed during the interview, the features recited in amended Claims 1 and 25 are advantageously provided to enable the arranging members 102a and 102b to strike against an end face of the paper S to arrange the paper with high precision (see specification at page 25, lines 23-25).

Applicants note that Ishiguro shows an alignment feeder B with an alignment feeding member 211 and a sorting feeder C with an alignment reference member 31, in which the alignment members 211, 31 are able to slide over a processing tray 11. As similarly noted during the interview, applicants submit that Ishiguro (approximately at S3) shows a step-like portion with respect to the top surface of the processing tray. The step-like portion of the processing tray 11 does not include front and rear points that are below an upper surface of the processing tray 11, and contact the upper surface of the processing tray 11. Therefore, as agreed to in the personal interview, Ishiguro does not teach or suggest at least a receiving portion including front and rear points that are below the upper surface of said discharge tray.

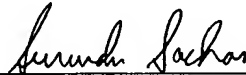
In such ways, applicants respectfully submit that the claims as currently written distinguish over the teaching in Ishiguro.

Furthermore, no teachings in Hoshi can overcome the above-noted deficiencies in Ishiguro. For example, applicants note that the figures of Hoshi describe a tray 3, 22, 42 without a receiving portion formed within its upper surface.

As no other issues are pending in this application, it is respectfully submitted that the present application is in condition for formal allowance, and it is hereby respectfully requested that this case be passed to issue.

Respectfully submitted,

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